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AUTHOR Davidson, Mary E.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This report reviews the implementation of Project Creating a New Approach to Learning (CANAL), part of a court-mandated desegregation plan in Chicago (Illinois), at the end of its first two years. CANAL's goal was to train the constituent representatives of the public schools to engage in shared decision-making and to develop organizational structures that incorporate the community in the organizational and educational processes of the schools. Implementing a school-based management (SBM) approach seemed to be the best way to improve academic achievement. However, project staff did not develop an evaluation design that would make it possible to evaluate problems in implementing SBM or measure the extent of its impact. Furthermore, baseline data were not collected on the 41 project sites. These problems of inadequate design were compounded by the following implementation problems: (1) most core planning teams (CPTs) did not include the specified constituencies; (2) parents and community members, the most important members of the CPTs, were most likely to be absent from the teams; (3) the second year of the project was characterized by further erosion of attendance at training; (4) the development of Local School Councils (LSCs) at the beginning of the second project year meant that the schools had two SBM teams; and (5) the project proposed to provide training for LSC members to assure cooperation with the core planning teams, but the great majority of them did not attend the meetings. (FMW)

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Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation

MONITORING PROJECT CANAL:

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS

. Mary E. Davidson
Principal Investigator

. Donn F. Bailey
Commission Chairperson

Submitted to the United States Department of Education

The Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation monitors implementation of The Student Desegregation Plan of the Chicago Public Schools

February 1991

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Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation
1819 West Pershing Road
6th Floor East (c)
Chicago, IL 60609
(312) 535-8220

MONITORING COMMISSION FOR DESEGREGATION IMPLEMENTATION'S

MONITORING PROJECT CANAL:

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS

Mary E. Davidson, Principal Investigator
Norman R. Kurtz, Primary Consultant

February 1991

Prepared under the direction of
Mary E. Davidson, Principal Investigator
Monitoring Commission for
Desegregation Implementation
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago, Illinois

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MONITORING COMMISSION FOR DESEGREGATION IMPLEMENTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Monitoring Project CANAL: Summary of the First Two Years

This report reviews the implementation of the CANAL model for school-based management at the end of the first two years. The original purpose of CANAL was to operationalize school-based management in selected schools of the Chicago Public Schools. The funds used to enable the implementation to go forward were the Settlement Funds for Desegregation. The justification for using the Settlement Funds was that school-based management seemed to be the best way to improve academic achievement. Project CANAL was intended to serve as a vehicle for learning lessons important to the successful initiation of school-based management.

As part of its court mandated responsibility for monitoring desegregation activities, the Monitoring Commission has been involved in an evaluation of the implementation of CANAL. The report summarizes the first two years of the implementation. The findings show that design for implementing Project CANAL has serious shortcomings.

- Project CANAL staff did not develop an evaluation design that would make it possible to evaluate problems in implementing school-based management or measure the extent of its impact.

- Baseline data were not collected on the 41 CANAL schools.

The problems of an inadequate design were compounded by those of implementation:

- Most core planning teams did not include the constituencies specified for the model of school-based management.

- Those most relevant to the model, parents and community members, were most likely to be absent from the teams.

- The second year of Project CANAL was characterized by further erosion of attendance at training.

- The development of local school councils at the beginning of the second year of CANAL, as a result of the enactment of the Illinois School Reform Act, meant that CANAL schools had two school-based management teams.

- Project CANAL proposed to provide training for local school council members to assure cooperation with the core planning teams. However, the great majority of local school council members did not attend the training.

Substantial problems of implementation exist at the opening of the third year of Project CANAL. The lack of response from the Project CANAL staff to respond to the concerns of the Monitoring Commission do not provide much room for optimism with regard to improvements in implementation.[1]

[1] The Commission is pleased to report that the Board has scheduled a full review for completion this spring.

INTRODUCTION

This is the Monitoring Commission's summary the first two years of monitoring Project CANAL. Project CANAL intended to demonstrate that implementing school-based management will improve academic achievement. A major task of Project CANAL was to train core planning teams to implement school-based management in CANAL schools. The importance of the success of the implementation increased when, in CANAL's second year, the Illinois legislature enacted a program of school reform requiring Chicago public schools to implement a management model similar to that proposed by Project CANAL.

Project CANAL is supported by the Settlement Funds for desegregation. The Settlement Funds represent the final payment of the federal government for assisting Chicago to desegregate its public schools. As the final payment, the Funds should be used judiciously to assure that they will make a meaningful contribution to solving the continuing problems of desegregation in Chicago public schools. Project CANAL, if properly implemented, represents a potential for making a contribution relevant to school reform.

BACKGROUND

Project CANAL seeks to improve the academic achievement of Chicago's public school children by radically altering the model for managing local schools. Using the five years of financial support available from the Settlement Funds, CANAL proposed to replace traditional hierarchical school management by professional educators with a governance model representing the collective wisdom of the community including parents, community members, ancillary school staff along with teachers and the school principal.

Project CANAL rests on recent thinking by national leaders who suggest that educational reform can be achieved through a school-based management model using shared decision-making as a vehicle for managing local schools by consensus. Each school involved in the experiment was to organize a management team, the Core Planning Team (CPT), consisting of the school principal, an indeterminate number of teachers, a minimum of three ancillary school staff, a minimum of five parents, a minimum of two community members, and, in the case of high schools, an unspecified number of students. Forty-one schools were selected initially to test the viability of the management model. The program got underway in October of 1988.

At the end of the first year of CANAL, the State of Illinois passed into law the School Reform Act. Under the Act, Chicago Public Schools are mandated to adopt a school-based management model of governance very similar to that of CANAL. The management teams of school reform, called Local School Councils, LSCs, are elected by the local community. The Act specifies that the LSCs include six parents, two community members, two teachers, and in the case of high schools, one non-voting student. The school principal is included as a member of the team.

There is a major difference in the memberships of LSCs of school reform and the CPTs of CANAL. LSCs have six parents, whereas CPTs have at least five; LSCs have two teachers, while CPTs tend to have a large number, anywhere from eight to 20. A further difference is that the CPTs are to include a minimum of three ancillary school staff while the LSCs have none.

The LSCs have more power than CPTs because they were created by legislative mandate whereas the CPTs exist by virtue of the voluntary decision of a school to participate in the federally-funded research demonstration project. Moreover, LSCs have full authority to manage their schools, including the right to remove the principal, make budgetary changes, and alter the local school curriculum.

Given the similarities between LSCs and CPTs, the findings of the Monitoring Commission's evaluation of CANAL's implementation CPTs may point to problems that could be encountered in implementing LSCs. The summary of the Commission's evaluation that follows, therefore, will draw inferences from the experience of CANAL that may be relevant to the LSCs of school reform.

Further modifications to Project CANAL were made by the School Board's Committee on Desegregation and recommended by the General Superintendent of Schools in Board Report 90-0321-MS4, March 21, 1990, the modifications include the following program initiatives:

(a) Continued training in school-based management and shared governance;

(b) Knowledge about curriculum foci that facilitate academic achievement;

(c) Knowledge about the total allocation of resources to the local school to allow for comprehensive planning and budgeting at the level of the local school; and,

(d) An evaluation plan that addresses both the process of implementing the foregoing initiatives as well as their impact on the academic achievement of participating students.

The Board report stated that "...the intent is to emphasize content and not just the process of decision making and thus improve the content and effectiveness of School Improvement Plans mandated by P.A. 85-1418."[2]

The same Board report emphasized the importance of including content for improving academic achievement:

- Settlement Funds will be used to provide professional assistance and training to Local School Council planning teams on options about curriculum to enable them to better participate in the selection of curriculum and program strategies;
- Settlement Funds will be used to provide information on foundation knowledge needed to plan and develop programs within the local schools related directly to academic achievement; and
- Settlement Funds will be used to provide Local School Council planning teams with skill training and basic knowledge about program initiatives for the short term (one year) and the long term (three years).[3]

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[2] Board Report 90-0321-MS4, March 21, 1990, p. 1169.

[3] Ibid., p. 1170.

The modifications represented the concern of the Committee on Desegregation that Project CANAL go beyond training in process and provide participants with content that will enrich their capacity to make decisions for improving academic achievement especially content on curriculum and instruction.

In as much as the Settlement Funds for desegregation supporting Project CANAL were intended to help Chicago achieve the goals of desegregation, the Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation is responsible for evaluating the implementation of CANAL. In summary, the Commission's continuing concerns are:

- Is Project CANAL properly implementing the proposed model in the participating schools;
- Has the implementation created any discernable effect on academic achievement;
- Has Project CANAL, which earmarked substantial funds for its own ongoing evaluation, in fact, implemented a reasonable evaluation plan that will allow replication of results in schools other than beyond those participating in CANAL; and finally,
- Has Project CANAL incorporated the Board recommended modifications regarding the inclusion of content on instructional models and curriculum foci?

YEAR 1 OF PROJECT CANAL

Evaluation of the Demonstration

Although a primary goal of Project CANAL was to assess the feasibility of implementing a model for school-based management in Chicago public schools, the staff of Project CANAL did not develop an evaluation design for assessing the impact of CANAL or identifying problems and promises likely to be encountered in extending the model beyond the 41 demonstration sites. The problem occurred even though the budget identified funds for designing such an evaluation. Moreover, Project CANAL staff ignored protests of the Monitoring Commission, made prior to the start of the demonstration, that an evaluation design was essential. As a consequence:

- Project CANAL was implemented without an appropriate evaluation design. For example, no quasi-control group of similar schools not participating in Project CANAL was identified that could have served as a benchmark for measuring changes in the demonstration schools.
- No baseline data on managerial competency and style were identified or collected on the participating schools that would make it possible to assess the impact of CANAL or replicate the results to schools beyond CANAL.

In consequence, there is no basis for determining the utility of school-based management as represented by the Project CANAL for Chicago public schools at large. It will be difficult to identify the effect of CANAL in the 41 demonstration schools. Lessons

that should have been learned and shared with the greater whole of the Chicago Public Schools, have been seriously compromised.

CPT Membership

The CPTs were the essence of Project CANAL's school-based management model. Representatives of constituencies on the CPTS specified in the CANAL model were crucial to its implementation. The advantage of the school-based management model is that it pools the collective wisdom of the representatives in governing the local school community. The model was compromised at the start in most schools because the CPTs did not include the representatives specified in the model.

- The majority of the CPTs did not include representation of constituents as set forth in the CANAL proposal, due either to inadequate programming or inability to convince individuals to serve.
- Methods for composing the teams varied substantially from school to school. Some were appointed (by school administrators), some simply volunteered and others were elected and within some schools two or more methods were used. Not utilizing a uniform method for composing the teams reduced the viability of learning lessons about school-based management from the implementation of CANAL.

- Community members and parents were frequently missing from the teams. Ancillary staff also were frequently absent or underrepresented.
- Community members and parents were to be the real "newcomers" and the major innovative components of school-based management. Their absence undermines the claim of Project CANAL to be a vehicle for assessing school-based management.
- The Monitoring Commission has received no compelling evidence that Project CANAL staff appreciated the gravity of not composing the CPTs properly. There is no record of strategies or efforts to redress the defects, nor has there been any explication to the Commission of the ramifications of the failures for future implementation.
- The problems in achieving proper representation, particularly of parents and community members may also affect LSCs. The initial efforts to compose LSCs seem to have been successful, but the possibility of encountering difficulties in the participation of parent and community members over the longer term, deserves attention.

Now in its third year of implementation, Project CANAL has not yet issued a report analyzing the problems in composing the CPTs in the 41 schools. At a minimum, an

analysis of the problems encountered in forming the teams is essential. Given the uncertainty of the model's viability, extension of the program to additional schools in year-3 makes such analysis imperative.

Size of the CPTs

There has been substantial variation in the number of members on the 41 CPTs. Questions about the number of individuals who can be effective in working together on complex tasks, such as managing a school, deserves careful attention. Apparently, Project CANAL staff delegated that discretion to local schools.

- The original model required a minimum of three ancillary staff, a minimum of five parents, and a minimum of two community members. In addition, the teams were to include the principal and an indeterminate number of teachers. High schools could include students (no number specified).
- Team size varied from eight to 40 members. So much variation in size further compromised the potential of Project CANAL to provide useful lessons on implementing a school-based management.
- The issue of size also may be related in important ways to the capacities of LSCs to meet their responsibilities. It deserves ongoing study and evaluation.

Turnover on CPTs

By the end of the first year of implementation, the CPTs had experienced substantial turnover.

- Turnover is important. Project CANAL emphasizes extensive training to prepare CPT members to use the process of shared decision-making in managing their schools. Turnover not only represents instability for the CPTs but a loss of the resources devoted to training those who leave.
- More than one third of the members of the 41 CPTs left the teams by the end of the first year.
- Three-fourths of the community members, two-thirds of the parents, one-third of the ancillary staff, and more than one-quarter of the teachers left the teams by the end of the first year.
- Efforts to reconstitute the teams showed no improvement in the representation of community members, parents, or ancillary school staff.
- Turnover also may be problematic with respect to the internal dynamics of the LSCs. The capacity of LSCs to meet their management responsibilities is likely to be closely linked to the stability of their memberships.

Quality of Year 1 Training

Most of the energy and resources of Project CANAL in year-1 were dedicated to training CPTs to carry out their management roles. The Monitoring Commission engaged in an observational analysis of the training process during year-1.

- CPTs usually were trained in groups of three to five teams. The groups were not exposed to the same trainers. There was substantial variation in the interests and approaches of the trainers and the training materials to which the CPTs were exposed. It cannot be assumed that the CPTs experienced the same quality or content of training.
- The lack of uniformity in training further negated the potential for learning about school-based management from CANAL.
- The observational analysis revealed poor preparation for some sessions, poor organization of materials that were presented, and environmental problems such as noise, inadequate control of room temperatures. and various intrusions. The second year of training saw improvements in these aspects of the training process.

First Year Training

During the first year CANAL provided CPTs with four days of training: Orientation to the CANAL concept; Day 1 and Day 2 training in school-based management and shared

decision-making skills; and, total site training in which each CPT trained with the entire staff of their school.

- Attendance at training sessions was unexpectedly low. About one-fourth of the CPT members did not participate. Those most likely to be absent were community members, parents, and ancillary staff. Thus, not only were community members parents, and ancillary staff underrepresented on the CPTs, but those who were on the teams were less likely to take part in CANAL training than teachers and principals.
- Attendance at training sessions did not improve as the year progressed; instead, it continued to decline.
- Project CANAL did not explain the lack of participation to the Commission. Furthermore, no evidence shared with the Commission that CANAL staff made an effort to formally evaluate the issue of poor attendance, or identify the factors responsible for absences.
- The issue of participation of CPT members in CANAL training needs attention. It should include analysis both of participation in skill training sessions and in other meetings as well. The concept of school-based management rests on an assumption that all of the various constituencies are trained and qualified to play an active role in the governing process.

School Improvement Plans

At the end of year-1, each CPT was expected to produce a school improvement plan reflecting the concerns and insights of all constituents on the team. The patterns of absenteeism from training activities necessitate questions about who actually produced the plans for each school.

- Project CANAL provided no data on participation in preparing school improvement plans. Was it primarily a product of teachers? Did parents and community members fail to take part in creating the plans to the same extent that they did in CANAL training? An account of participation in developing the school improvement plans is critical if CANAL is to claim that the plan is a product of school-based management.
- The improvement plans themselves as evaluated by the Monitoring Commission reveal wide variation in quality. There is no way to assess from the plans or CANAL analyses, whether shared decision-making played an important role in the process.

YEAR 2 OF PROJECT CANAL

At the beginning of year-2 it appears that the staff of Project CANAL, implicitly if not explicitly, abandoned the original model for school-based management as presented in the CANAL proposal.

- No evidence was forthcoming to the Monitoring Commission of efforts to address the problems of team composition that were encountered in year-1.
- More than 40 percent of the CPT members were new at the beginning of year-2, but the new members simply replaced members lost after year-1. No improvements were made in representing the parents, community members, and ancillary staff.
- No effort was made to inform the broader community of the Chicago public schools about the problems in implementing the CPTs of Project CANAL during year-1.
- Rather than focus on lessons to be learned from the problems of year-1 implementation, CANAL staff proceeded in year-2 as though the proposed school-based management model was in place and running successfully.
- Implicitly, the decision to go forward indicated that Project CANAL staff were determined to proceed with their schedule of activities despite serious problems in implementing the CANAL model. The training activities seemed to become a substitute for implementing the model described in the CANAL proposal.

- With appropriate education and explication of problems, Project CANAL could have been of considerable value for the LSCs of school reform. It could have illuminated difficulties in initiating school-based management for LSCs, so that the problems could have been anticipated and means for correcting them developed. Instead, the CANAL staff did not want to garner lessons from their attempts to implement a similar model, minimizes what could have been learned from the efforts.

Year-2 training continued with major emphasis on providing teams with knowledge about process and skills to play their management roles more effectively. During the first half of year-2 CANAL's training activities were characterized by:

- Absenteeism of CPT members from the training sessions of Project CANAL increased.
- Parents, community members and ancillary staff continued to lead in absenteeism. No community members attended any of the year-2 sessions, 70 percent of the parents were absent, and about 60 percent of the ancillaries were absent from total site training.
- Even more significant, only about half of the principals attended total site training, and as many as a third of the teachers failed to attend. Why did half of the principals fail at attend total site training that was explicitly prepared for their school? Why were so many teachers absent? CANAL provided

a cadre of substitutes so that every teacher in a school receiving total site training could attend. CANAL staff provided the Commission with no explanation for why so many teachers were absent when funds were expended to provide substitutes in their absence.

- The same patterns of absenteeism characterized other CPT training during year-2. The apparent loss of interest in CANAL by principals and teachers may indicate the reason for not implementing the proposed model for school-based management.

A number of special training sessions were offered to different constituencies of the school community during year-2. The sessions consumed considerable time and resources, but failed to attract the individuals for whom they were designed. For example:

- Special training sessions for school principals were not well attended. One of five high school principals failed to attend, and 14 of 36 elementary school principals declined the opportunity. The schools represented by the principals receive substantial stipends for participating in CANAL. Given the stipends, the lack of a sense of obligation to the program initiated by the absences of the principals seemed inappropriate.

- Only three engineers and two food services individuals attended a special session for engineers and food service managers of the 41 CANAL schools. If all those who should have attended had been there, 82 would have been in attendance instead of five.
- Only 31 CPT members representing nine of the 41 CANAL schools attended a seminar on assertive discipline.
- A session on multicultural issues in education attracted only 11 CPT members from seven CANAL schools.

The above facts are not encouraging. Project CANAL training reached very few members of the 41 CPTs and perhaps had little impact on their capacity to meet their responsibilities.

By the end of the first year of the implementation of CANAL, the State Legislature of Illinois adopted the School Reform Act, and by October of year-2, each school in the city of Chicago had elected a Local School Council, the LSC. The functions and responsibilities of the CPTs at the CANAL schools and the LSCs of school reform were very similar. However, CANAL staff proposed continuation of the two groups parallel to one another in the 41 CANAL schools rather than integrating them. The CPTs were to develop the school improvement plans, while the LSCs would enact them.

CANAL proposed to organize special training sessions for LSCs so they would be informed of the school-based management model of CANAL, and have an opportunity to develop skills in shared decision-making. Let us not forget that CANAL assumed that skills in shared decision-making were essential for CPTs, but the low number of CPT members

who attended the training sessions provided little reason to believe that sufficient numbers were present for the training to have any general benefit.

Project CANAL staff prepared materials for an orientation session and eight additional modules for training LSC members. The training plan originally included 10 modules, but two were never offered. LSC members were under no obligation to attend, but the assumption was that the sessions would attract them. However, the assumption was poorly founded in that Project CANAL failed to attract LSC members to the training sessions.

- Only 49 percent of the LSC members came to orientation meetings. Those least likely to attend were parents (41 percent) and community members (34 percent). Surprisingly, only 61 percent of the principals came.
- Attendance at Module I training declined substantially. Only eight (20 percent) of 41 principals, 41 percent of the teachers, 24 percent of the parents, and 15 percent of the community members attended. Overall, only 25 percent of those who were expected to attend were present.
- Four separate sessions offered training in Modules I, I, II and III. Over all four of the sessions, only seven principals showed up, as did only 15 teachers (18 percent) of the teachers, 30 parents (12 percent), and three community members (four percent). Only 12 percent of those expected to attend did so.

- Module IV was offered five times and over all of the five sessions, only six principals, only 19 teachers (23 percent), 34 parents (14 percent) and seven community members (eight percent) attended. Only 14 percent of all those who were expected to attend, actually arrived.
- Module V was offered five times. Over all five sessions only seven principals (17 percent), 12 teachers (15 percent), 20 parents (eight percent), and two community member (two percent) came. Only nine percent of those who were expected to attend actually did so.
- Module VI was offered on four occasions.The four sessions were attended by four principals, 12 teachers (15 percent), 28 parents (11 percent), and seven community members (nine percent). Only 11 percent of the potential audience was present over all four offerings.
- Module VII was offered four times, but across those four presentations, four principals, 11 teachers (13 percent), 26 parents (11 percent) and five community members (six percent) attended.
- Module VIII showed no improvement: only nine percent of the potential audience was present.

The effort to attract LSC members to learn about the concepts and processes of school-based management as represented by Project CANAL was not successful. Resources used for the venture were poorly spent. Despite all the problems of attendance, CANAL staff provided the Commission with no formal description of the enterprize nor did they offer any explanation for not attracting LSC members.

Training activities in the second half of year-2 continued to display previous problems of attendance.

- A total site training sequence held for CPTs from February 28 to June 13 attracted less than half of the members.
- CPT training sessions during May and June were attended by only 45 percent of the CPT members. Less than half of the principals, 20 of 41, attended.
- A session held for students of CANAL schools drew only 65 students who represented only 28 of the 41 CANAL schools. Thirteen schools had no students attending the session.
- Three sessions were held on the Socratic method of teaching, and over all three sessions only seven CPT members and only 11 other people attended (the others had titles indicating that they were promoters of the Socratic method rather than newcomers to the model). Only four CANAL schools were represented in the three sessions.

- A variety of seminars on special topics were held during the summer months. Some focused on teaching methods, attracting only small audiences. Others were involved in training individuals to do word processing. The great majority of those attending the word processing sessions came from one school. Initially the trainers used an outdated version of WordPerfect in the training session. Job training for adults is important, but CANAL did not provide a rational for how job training relates to the implementation of school-based management. More particularly, its relationship to elevating the capacity of students with respect to academic achievement has not been explicated.

There was no evidence that Project CANAL made a serious effort to incorporate the Board recommended modifications to include content on instructional models and curriculum foci by the end of year-2. The sessions continued to be dominated by training in process skills for decision making.

CONCLUSION

Project CANAL has been underway for more than two years. It has expended a substantial amount of Chicago's Settlement Fund monies. The original goal of implementing a school-based management model seems to have been abandoned in practice if not in concept. Key components of the model have never been successfully implemented. Moreover, although resources to evaluate the effort were available, no evaluation design was

developed that is producing useful information on the progress of the implementation. In fact, there is so much variation within and between the CANAL schools that identifying outcomes resulting from the CANAL model seems virtually impossible. This means that the original goal of learning lessons that can be replicated in other schools is not likely to be realized. At best, CANAL initiated a process, dominated by a series of activities that may in and of themselves be useful, but their relevance to learning how school-based management will be limited.

The inability of the Project CANAL staff to deal forthrightly with each implementation problem as it occurred, raises serious question about the appropriateness of continuing to use the Settlement Funds for the endeavor. In addition, given that the purpose of CANAL was to evaluate the potential of the model for replication throughout the public schools of Chicago, the inadequacy of the implementation negates the potential for replication.

These problems are particularly poignant because the Settlement Funds represent the **final payment** by the Federal government for a previously failed obligation to provide financial assistance to the disadvantaged children of Chicago's public schools. Project CANAL represents the last foreseeable opportunity to address the needs of our Chicago public school children in racially identifiable schools with federal funds for desegregation. Will Chicago's children receive any discernable benefit from the CANAL effort? Is CANAL the best hope and most direct method for making an impact on the capacity of the children of Chicago Public Schools to achieve academically? If there is any evidence of improved academic achievement in CANAL schools? If improvement occurs, can it be linked to

Project CANAL with sufficient information to explain any changes that occur? If no improvement occurs, will it be due to CANAL? Will the Project have reliable information that will convince educational leaders to replicate elements of the program? These are the questions to which the Monitoring Commission seeks answers.[4]

[4] The Commission is pleased to report that the Board has scheduled a full review for completion this spring.